

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MUSCAT 00992 290459Z
ACTION NEA-07

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FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3382
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MU, SA, IR, YS
SUBJECT: SULTAN'S RECENT TRAVELS; AN IRANIAN VIEW OF OMANI
REGIONAL RELATIONS

REF: MUSCAT 0783 (NOTAL)

1. SULTAN QABOOS HAS BEEN IN A TRAVELING MOOD. AFTER HIS
OFFICIAL VISITS TO SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT BEGINNING MAY 14,
FOLLOWED BY A SCHEDULED PRIVATE VISIT TO JORDAN (REFTEL), THE
SULTAN ADDED BRITAIN TO HIS ITINERARY AS A PRIVATE TOURIST. HE
RETURNED FROM THIS FOUR-NATION JAUNT ON JUNE 9. SCARCELH HAD HE
SETTLED DOWN WHEN HE WENT OFF ON A PRIVATE JOURNEY TO IRAN ON
JUNE 13. HE RETURNED FROM THIS JUNE 15.

2. APART FROM THE OBLIGATORY BIG HEADLINE IN THE NEWSPAPER ON
HIS RETURN, ACCCOMPANIED BY AN EVEN MORE UNINFORMATIVE ARTICLE THAN
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USUAL UNDERNEATH, THERE WAS LITTLE PUBLICITY ABOUT THE IRAN
TRIP. CHARGE CALLED ON IRANIAN AMBASSADOR JUNE 27 TO SEE IF LATTER
WOULD THROW LIGHT ON THE MATTER. AMBASSADOR STRESSED PRIVATE
CHARACTER OF VISIT AND NOTED THAT SULTAN CONFERS WITH THE SHAH
PERIODICALLY. WITHOUT REVEALING ANY SPECIFICS ON DISCUSSIONS
SULTAN AND SHAH MAY HAVE HAD, AMBASSADOR GAVE FOLLOWING AS
CURRENT STATE OF PLAY IN OMAN-IRAN RELATIONS:

(A) PDRY IS INSISTING IN SAUDI-LED MEDIATION EFFORT WITH OMAN THAT ALL IRANIAN TROOPS LEAVE OMANI SOIL. (THIS IS ONE OF TWO CONDITIONS, AMBASSADOR SAID, THE OTHER BEING THAT BRITISH OFFICERS IN SAF BE REPLACED BY ARABS. BUT THIS POINT IS APPARENTLY BEING PRESSED LESS ARDENTLY.) SHAH HAS TOLD QABOOS THAT IRANIAN TROOPS ARE IN OMAN AT SULTAN'S INVITATION AND WOULD LEAVE ANY TIME SULTAN ASKS THEM TO GO.

(B) FOR HIS PART, QABOOS IS TORN BETWEEN PRESSURE ON HIM TO MEET THE PDRY CONDITION AND HIS SKEPTICISM ABOUT PDRY SINCERITY IN PROFESSING MODERATION. ACCORDING TO AMBASSADOR, THERE WAS SOME MINOR SHOOTING ALONG OMAN-PDRY BORDER ON JUNE 9, A PFLO ANNIVERSARY. SULTAN FEARS THAT, IF IRANIAN TROOPS LEAVE, IT WILL BE POLITICALLY DIFFICULT TO ASK THEM BACK IN THE FUTURE SHOULD THE NEED ARISE.

3. SULTAN'S SKEPTICISM, AMBASSADOR ADDED, CONTRASTS WITH SAUDI OPTIMISM ABOUT THEIR MEDIATION EFFORT. SINCE SAUDI INFLUENCE IS BECOMING VERY STRONG IN OMAN, SULTAN CAN HARDLY RESIST RIYADH'S VIEWPOINT. AMBASSADOR HAD HEARD SAME NEWS AS WE AND OTHERS THAT SAUDIS ARE SUPPLYING VAST SUMS TO OMAN FOLLOWING SULTAN'S RECENT TRIP TO RIYADH. AMBASSADOR'S VERSION IS THAT \$250 MILLION, POSSIBLY MORE, WILL BE PROVIDED EACH OF NEXT FIVE YEARS, I.E. DURATION OF OMANI'S FIVE-YEAR PLAN. THIS TOTALS TO OVER \$1 BILLION, THE FIGURE WE HAD PICKED UP. AMBASSADOR DID NOT KNOW

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TERMS OF THE DEAL. NOR WAS HE AWARE OF SPECULATION AROUND MUSCAT THAT SAUDIS GOT LEASE OF CORRIDOR FOR PIPELINE AS QUID PRO QUO, BUT HE SEEMED VERY INTERESTED TO HEAR OF THIS POSSIBILITY. HIS VIEW OF PROBABLE QUID PRO QUO WAS THAT BORDER PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN SETTLED IN SAUDI ARABIA'S FAVOR.

4. AMBASSADOR DISPLAYED NO CONCERN OVER APPARENT NEW SAUDI POSITION IN OMAN. HE WAS PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT WIDENING SAUDI INFLUENCE THROUGHOUT PENINSULA, SEEMINGLY AWARE THAT IRAN COULD NOT COMPETE. HE CHARACTERIZED IRAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO OMAN AS "FILLING A GAP" WITH MILITARY ASSISTANCE AT A TIME WHEN NO OTHER COUNTRY COULD SUPPLY SUCH HELP. HE WAS PROUD OF IRAN'S PARTICIPATION IN ONE OF THIS CENTURY'S RARE VICTORIES OF CONVENTIONAL FORCES OVER GUERRILLAS. NOW THE TIME FOR SUCH CONTRIBUTION MAY HAVE PASSED, AND IT IS THE SAUDIS' TURN TO PLAY THEIR DIPLOMATIC AND FINANCIAL GAME.

SIZER

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